

Message Text

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43

ACTION EA-14

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P R 301210Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3731

INFO AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL SONGKHLA

AMCONSUL UDORN

CINCPAC

DIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 8800

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, TH

SUBJ: RUMORED CABINET APPOINTEES AND CONSTITUTION DRAFTING

REF: A. BANGKOK 8689 B. FBIS D291510Z MAY 74

SUMMARY: RENOMINATED PRIME MINISTER SANYA THAMMASAK CONTINUES TO FLESH OUT HIS CABINET. ALTHOUGH MANY NAMES ARE ALREADY PUBLIC, SANYA HAS NOT FILLED THE LAST FEW POSTS, AND HAS NOT FORMALLY ANNOUNCED THE LINE-UP. SANYA PROMISED A NEW, YOUTHFUL LOOK TO THE CABINET, BUT A GREATER AGE RANGE SEEMS TO BE THE THEME. SEVENTY-FIVE YEAR OLD RETIRED GENERAL KHRUAN SUTHANIN AS POSSIBLE DEFENSE MINISTER MORE THAN BALANCES DR. CHAO NA SINLAWAN, 44, TAPPED AS COMMUNICATIONS
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MINISTER. THE FORMAL ANNOUNCEMENT MAY COME BY THE END OF

THE WEEK. NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY SPEAKER KHUKRIT PRAMOT PROMISED A CONSTITUTION BY AUGUST. WHILE THE SECOND SANYA CABINET MAY NOT FULFILL EVERYONE'S DREAMS, WE EXPECT THAT IT WILL GOVERN THE APPROXIMATELY SIX MONTHS UNTIL ELECTIONS.. END SUMMARY.

1. RENOMINATED PRIME MINISTER SANYA THAMMASAK'S MINISTERIAL CHOICES ARE A FAIRLY WELL KNOWN SECRET ABOUT TOWN. THE LIST IS NOT COMPLETE, AMONG OTHER REASONS BECAUSE THE PRIME CANDIDATE FOR FINANCE MINISTER, SOMMAI HUNTRAKUN, IS IN INDIA (REFTEL). IT IS FAIRLY CERTAIN THAT THE NEW DEFENSE MINISTER WILL BE 75 YEAR OLD RETIRED GENERAL KHRUAN SUTHANIN WITH AIR CHIEF MARSHAL BUA SIRISUP AND ADMIRAL THAWIN RAYANON AS HIS DEPUTIES. KHRUAN, DESPITE PRESS STORIES TO THE CONTRARY, HAD A STRONG REPUTATION AS ROYAL THAI ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF UNDER MARSHAL SARIT THANARAT. GENERAL KRIT SIWARA SHOULD HAVE NO PROBLEMS WITH THIS SERVICE TRIMVIRATE. BOTH THE FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER AND HIS DEPUTY ARE LIKELY TO REMAIN.

2. SANYA HAS PROMISED A NEW AND VIGOROUS LOOK TO THE CABINET AND APPARENTLY THREE MINISTERS (WICHAN NIWATWONG - COMMERCE; DR. CHAO NA SINLAWAN -- COMMUNICATIONS; KASEM SUWANNAKUN - STATE UNIVERSITIES BUREAU) AND FOUR DEPUTY MINISTER (DR. THALOENG THAMRONGNAWASAWAT - AGRICULTURE; PRAKAIPHET INTHUSOPHON - INDUSTRY; PRASONG SUKHUM - COMMERCE; SIPHUM SUKNET - COMMUNICATIONS) WILL BE UNDER 50 YEARS OLD. OTHER YOUNGER MEN MAY BE NAMED TO CABINET POSTS AS SANYA COMPLETES HIS LIST. SUCH NOMINATIONS FOLLOW THE THAI PATTERN OF MAINTAINING SENIORITY, BUT MOVING YOUNGER PEOPLE TO THE APPRENTICE LEVEL. THE KEY MINISTRIES -- INTERIOR, DEFENSE, FOREIGN AFFAIRS -- REMAIN THE THE HANDS OF SENIOR TO ANCIENT APPOINTEES.

3. SANYA HAS APPARENTLY HAD SOME PROBLEMS FILLING CERTAIN POSTS AND THE FORMAL ANNOUNCEMENT MAY NOT COME BEFORE THE END OF THE WEEK. SOME RUMORED NOMINATIONS ARE UNIQUE. PHUNLOET BURANAN, WHOM THE NEWSPAPERS IDENTIFY AS AN ORANGE GROWER, IS MENTIONED IN "THE NATION" MAY 30 AS A POSSIBLE DEPUTY AGRICULTURE MINISTER. DR. ARUN SORATHET, CONFIDENTIAL

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FORMERLY STATE UNIVERSITY BUREAU MINISTER, IS TOUTED AS THE INDUSTRY MINISTER. FORMER FINANCE MINISTER BUNMA WONGSAWAN, SEATO SECRETARY GENERAL SUNTHON HONGLADAROM AND OTHERS HAVE REFUSED CABINET POSTS. TWO PROMINENT YOUNGER MEN WHO HAVE APPARENTLY TURNED DOWN CABINET PORTFOLIOS ARE KASEM CHATIKAWANIT AND SANO UNAKUN. A NATIONAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT BOARD OFFICIAL TOLD THE ECONOMIC SOUNSELOR THAT THERE IS A FEELING THAT SERVING IN THE SECOND

SANYA CABINET MAY BE A LIABILITY FOR ANYONE WITH POLITICAL AMBITIONS.

4. NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY SPEAKER M.R. KHUKRIT PRAMOT ANSWERED A WIDE RANGE OF QUESTIONS ON A TELEVISED "MEET THE PRESS" PROGRAM THE EVENING OF MAY 29. MANY OF HIS COMMENTS WERE SIMILAR TO THOSE THE MDE AT THE FOREIGN CORESPONDENTS CLUB TO THAILAND DINNER MAY 9 (BANGKOK 7605). HE PRAISED POLICE MAJOR GENERAL LUANG ATTHASIT SITTHISUNTHORN, INTERIOR MINISTER DESIGNEE, AS AN HONEST MAN WHO WILL GUARANTEE THAT THE ELECTIONS, FOR WHICH INTERIOR IS RESPONSIBLE, WILL BE FAIR AND CLEAN. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION WHICH POINTED OUT THAT SOME OF THE NOMINEES WERE NLA MEMBERS, KHUKRIT DENIED THAT THE NLA HAD GIVEN SANYA ANY CONDITIONS FOR CABINET NOMINEES. KHUKRIT GAVE ASSURANCES THAT THE NLA WILL PROMULGATE THE CONSTITUTION IN AUGUST, AND THAT ELECTIONS WOULD BE IN NOVEMBER OR DECEMBER. HE ALSO SAID THAT WITH YOUNGER MEN IN THE CABINET AND A NEW MANDATE, THE SANYA GOVERNMENT SHOULD DO WELL IN ALLEVIATING SOME IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS.

5. THE "BANGKOK POST" FRONTPAGED A STORY MAY 30, REPORTEDLY FROM A PROSPECTIVE MINISTER IN THE NEW CABINET, THAT THE RTG MAY CONSIDER PROMULGATING ONE OF THE EARLIER CONSTITUTIONS IN ORDER TO HASTEN ELECTIONS. CRITICS HAVE FAULTED THE SLOW PROGRESS OF THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION, BUT WE HAVE NO INDICATION OF WIDE SUPPORT FOR A MOVE TO SCRAP IT. SOME MAY BE FLOATING THIS STORY, HOWEVER, AS A PROD TO THE ASSEMBLY TO GET GOING ON THE DRAFT.

6. NATIONAL STUDENT CENTER OF THAILAND SECRETARY GENERAL SOMBAT THAMRONGTHANYAWONG AND OTHER PANELISTS AT A THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY SEMINAR MAY 28 CALLED ON THE GOVERNMENT

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TO HELP FARMERS AND OTHER POOR SEGMENTS OF THE SOCIETY. THE AUDIENCE DRIFTED AWAY DURING THIRAYUT BUNMI'S SPEECH IN WHICH HE SHARPLY CRITICIZED THE GOVERNMENT. HE CONTINUED HIS RECENT PERSONAL ATTACKS ON GENERAL KRIT SIWARA, CLAIMING THAT KRIT MAKES MILLIONS OF BAHT FROM HIS INTERESTS IN THE INDUSTRIAL SUGAR COMPANY. ALL SPEAKERS TOOK THE LINE THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAS A NEW CABINET AND A NEW MANDATE, AND SHOULD GOVERN THE COUNTRY MORE VIGOROUSLY.

7. COMMENT: STUDENT AND OTHER GROUPS MAY EXPECT TOO MUCH OF THE SECOND SANYA CABINET. THANAT KHOMAN TOLD THE CHARGE SOMEWHAT CYNICALLY MAY 29 THAT HE EXPECTED THE PRESS HONEYMOON TO LAST ONE WEEK.

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